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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#) [GM](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: DAS GARBER IN BERLIN: GERMANY SIGNALS ITS INTEREST  
IN ENGAGING RUSSIA AND HELPING GEORGIA

REF: USNATO 00393

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Jeffrey Rathke for reasons:  
1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During EUR Deputy Assistant Secretary Judith Garber's meetings with MFA and Chancellery officials on October 22, contacts shared concern as to whether the Russian actions in Georgia were a "one-off occurrence" or reflected a new pattern in Russian foreign policy. MFA and Chancellery officials were in agreement that the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) should be convened and used for a blunt discussion with Russia. MFA Special Envoy to the South Caucasus Hans-Dieter Lucas described the Geneva talks on October 15 as "not encouraging," and suggested that it remains questionable whether the next meeting will take place on November 18. END SUMMARY

RE-ENGAGING RUSSIA

¶2. (C) MFA and Chancellery officials emphasized that Germany has significant interest in resuming engagement with Russia via the EU and the NRC, and expressed their frustration with the ambiguity surrounding "no business as usual." Although Germany has not determined whether Russia's recent actions in Georgia reflect a new pattern, officials were united in their determination that the West engage Russia. Lucas argued that the EU could resume negotiations on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) as the PCA is more in the interest of the EU than Russia. He pointed out that the PCA will be a significant topic during the EU-Russia Summit on November 14. More generally, Lucas argued that EU unity and swiftness in reacting was one positive outcome following the war in Georgia. Chancellery Division Head of Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union Countries Juergen Schultz informed DAS Garber that French President Sarkozy called several European heads of government to formulate an approach toward Russia before agreeing to fly to Moscow for the August 12 meeting; Schultz argued that such swift cooperation and unity was an achievement for the EU.

¶3. (C) MFA and Chancellery officials were using the same talking points detailing why convening the NRC was necessary. According to Germany, the NRC was created not only for smooth sailing in good weather but was a forum for contentious discussions during bad weather. Deputy NSA Rolf Nikel was especially concerned that if the NRC did not convene to discuss strategy with Russia, Russia would continue to engage bilaterally and play western countries off each other. Lucas stressed that Germany "feels strongly" that NRC is the right vehicle for a blunt discussion about NATO-Russia relations. In a follow-up conversation, MFA Office Director for Defense and Security Policy Bernhard Schlagheck told Poloffs that NATO "was getting left out of a flurry of bilateral meetings" due to the lack of NRC sessions. Schlagheck argued that the NRC provides a forum to

express a consolidated view to Russia regarding its actions in Georgia and should not be sidelined in relations with Russia.

14. (C) All contacts conveyed their confusion as to what exactly "no business as usual" entails and what would allow the resumption of some or all business, especially in the NRC. Lucas informed DAS Garber that when MFA State Secretary Silberberg postponed the security consultations with Russia, MFA officials received several angry phone calls from the Russians. Lucas argued that this exemplified the bigger picture of how the "no business as usual" policy has been felt by the Russians; Lucas argued that the message has been received, allowing the West to engage in cooperation "wherever possible and where in our interest." DAS Garber pushed back and argued that the U.S. would be unlikely to support cooperation wherever possible. Nikel argued that the NRC could convene at some level, not for business as usual but as a forum to engage Russia jointly. Schlagheck told Poloffs that the MFA does not support postponing the NRC until Russia has met all the conditions expressed in August 12 and September 8 Agreements as this would continue to sideline NATO. Moreover, he argued that enough conditions had been met that a session at the Ambassador level rather than a ministerial session could be a forum for discussing contentious issues with Russia.

15. (C) Contacts expressed varying reactions to the Russian proposal for a new security architecture in Europe. Nikel shared his concern with DAS Garber that the debate surrounding this proposal will be "played out in unhelpful institutions," and that will "create havoc," if the Alliance

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continues to postpone engaging Russia. In Nikel's view, the debate on the proposal that could "mess around with NATO" and could either play out in "an uncontrollable process" or in a "process we know." Specifically, the NRC provides a forum to discuss the proposal "before it blows up." Nikel argued that the Russians are playing members of the Alliance off each other by engaging some on the matter and only sharing their proposal with a select few. (NOTE: Russians officials have not shared their one-pager with the U.S. USNATO obtained an unofficial copy. See reftel.) Schlagheck was not as alarmist regarding the Russian proposal in a conversation with Poloffs, and argued that although the proposal was an attempt to cut the U.S. out of European security and undermine NATO, this effort would fail and therefore was not a significant cause of concern. Schlagheck informed Embassy that the MFA had made this clear to the Russians, but agreed with the Chancellery that the NRC provides a good forum for engaging the Russians on the proposal's principles.

ASSISTING GEORGIA

16. (C) Lucas stressed the German commitment to helping Georgia but expressed concern regarding what projects German aid would fund and the political situation in Germany. He informed DAS Garber that Germany was looking for a better needs assessment that included more projects designed to assist reconstruction and with a regional approach to the South Caucasus. Moreover, the MFA is concerned that projects not be played as an endorsement to every aspect of Georgian politics. Lucas shared the German interest in projects supporting the rule of law and civil society development.

17. (C) Lucas provided a frank assessment of Geneva talks on October 15 as both a demi-success and a demi-failure. The MFA is uncertain whether talks will resume on November 18 given doubts about the parties' interest in a political process that binds Georgia, Russia, and the two breakaway provinces together. Lucas confirmed that Germany would continue to push for resumption on November 18, but feared that Abkhazia especially did not want a process that might threaten "its new independence." In an earlier meeting, Chancellery Desk Officer for the South Caucasus Agapi Nehring

on October 21 told Poloffs that these first Geneva talks were bogged down by the procedural difficulties. Nehring confirmed that Paris and Brussels are taking the lead on resolving the difficulties, and that Germany would accept the EU resolution provided the two breakaway provinces were not seated as national delegations.

¶8. (C) If procedural difficulties persist and the Geneva talks do not resume, Lucas expected the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to step into the breach and provide a mechanism for enforcing rule of law, which would be a stretch for the mission. Nehring stressed that observers are not mandated to be peacekeepers or enforce the rule of law, and Lucas confirmed that the EU would need to reconsider the mandate if the EUMM had to play this larger role. The current EUMM mandate last twelve months, according to Nehring.

¶9. (U) This cable has been reviewed and approved by DAS Garber.  
TIMKEN JR